

A Study on the Living Conditions of the Housemates of the Orphanage Run by Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Kanyakumari District

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Abstract

“Humanity is a basic virtue each human being has to have”, is an ethic profound by all religions of the world. Activists who are working on humanitarian ground run orphanages, old age homes and so on. One among these orphanages is the orphanage run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus a catholic religious organization of the nuns. For about seven decades these orphanages are being run by the sisters. These are unprofitable society oriented, charity organizations. The housemates of these orphanages were well settled by the sisters. In this article an attempt has been taken to review the present-day living condition of those persons who were settled by the sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Key Words: Abandon, Congregation, inmates, orphanage, society, unprofitable, housemates

Introduction:

The sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a religious congregation for women established in Kanyakumari district. It was founded in 1952 by Sr. Scholastica who was the first Mother Superior of the Congregation. She was primarily a religious nun of ICM Congregation of Immaculate Heart of Mary. Later due to her instinct she left the ICM Congregation and started the new Congregation of sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (here after it will be a referred as SSHJ) purely for the native women.¹

Rev. Sr. Scholastica:

Sr. Scholastica was born on 15-10-1917. Her father was Mr. Savarimuthu and mother was Savariyaie. Her parents named her Jesuvadiyal². When she joined in Augustin Congregation, she was named as Scholastica. She had six sisters. She was a native of Patarivilai village in Manguli parish, Kottar diocese, Kanyakumari district. But at present Manguli parish belong to Kuzhithurai diocese. Sr. Scholastica founded the SSHJ on 21st June 1952 at Azhagappapuram to serve the poor, needy and downtrodden people in the society. During the first decade of its formation, she faced many challenges. However, she encountered everything with courage and faith. Amidst those troubles and tribulations, she founded on orphanage at Azhagappapuram named as St. Fathima Annai orphanage in 1964 for serving the destitute women and orphan children.³

The first orphan child who admitted in this orphanage was taken from the dark hill area of Thirumulanagar. Mother Scholastica brought up the child with homely atmosphere, intense care, love and affection. Names as Sr. Sthanislas, she learnt well and adorned with all the administrative post in the same Congregation. Unfortunately, she accepted the call of God and reached her heavenly abode on 5th August 2006.⁴

As the number of inmates in Saint Fathima Annai orphanage was increasing it was very difficult for the sisters to provide the basic needs. Particularly the scarcity of food affected the health of the children. Therefore, in order to meet this challenge to provide a healthy life and satisfy the needs of the inmates, a new orphanage was established at Kurusady in Nagercoil.⁵ The name of this new orphanage is St. Anthony's orphanage. This orphanage was given permission to be served as a specialized adoption

agency by the Government of Tamil Nadu on 21-12-2022. Angelin Claret was the first child given to St. Anthony’s orphanage by the Kanyakumari district Child Welfare Committee to be brought up and to give as a adopted child legally.⁶

Though the Reverend Sisters do not experience the family life, they extent the motherly love and affection to all the children to witness the love of God. Sr. Mary is the mother of all these children⁷. There are many generous hearted people like Rotary Club, Lions Club, NSS volunteers from various schools and colleges, especially students and teachers from the nearby Holy Cross College and many more individuals in and around Kanyakumari district often visited this orphanage with lots of presentation in the form of money and delicious and healthy food materials and bless the inmates of the Home for a better life.⁸

The sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus meet the expenditure of the children till they became grown up and reach independence and self-reliance in life. From 1952 to 2020 more than thousand students, forsaken children, divorced young women, destitute widows and the aged were mercifully cared and were given shelter, education, self-confidence and good life. Following table, I give a clear detail about the inmates of the orphanage from 1952 to 2020.⁹

Table -I: List of children brought up in the orphanages from 1952 to 2020

	Azhagappapuram Orphanage student			Kurusady Orphanage student		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Pure orphans	3	23	26	6	15	21
Semi orphans	-	15	15	4	8	12
Widows	-	8	8	-	23	23
Boarding students	-	125	125	15	160	175

Senior sisters who have well trained in counseling gave both group and individual counseling to the intimates and individual counseling to the divorced widows and their husbands and made many families to rejoin and have a happy family life¹⁰. Besides, the children who were cared by this convent had a good education, and became nurses, teachers, business men and technicians and so on. Often, they visit the home where they were brought up with great pleasure and enthusiasm.¹¹

There were 47 orphans brought up during the study period. Eight of them became religious nuns, one became a religious father or priest and five are not yet married and led a single life. The following table II project a vivid picture of the marital status of the inmates of the orphanages run by the SSHJ.¹²

Table II - List of the marital status of the orphans from 1963 to 2020

Married	Unmarried	Widow	Sisters & Fathers	Total
30	5	3	8 +1	47

Apart from these children destitute widows, divorced and separated women and their children were also brought up by the SSHJ¹³. The table III explicitly express the details about the children of the deserted women.¹⁴

Table III - The deserted and rejected women lived in the homes

At present living as a family	Inmates in the Home	Death	Total
3	21	9	33

Discussion:

From the above data and details, one could come to a conclusion that the orphans, semi orphans and all the inmates of the homes run by the SSHJ are living in a self-contained life. Though they faced many hardships in their life before they enter in the homes run by the SSHJ, they led a peaceful life afterwards. Most of the orphans were well settled¹⁶. With the support of the SSHJ, they got an opportunity to get good education, a nice career and a well settled life. 40 of the inmates of the homes are living in and around Kanyakumari district, Salem, Cuddalore, Vellore and Chennai further some are settled in the nearby states like Andhra and Kerala too. 4 of the inmates of the homes run by the SSHJ are now settled in foreign countries such Saudi Arabia, Qatar too.¹⁷

Conclusion:

The Congregation of the sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was started in 1952. It was established purely for the native. The major service of the Congregation was establishing orphanage and mercy homes. The main aim and objective of the homes was helping the poor, downtrodden, destitutes and the abandoned children and women and empower them with education and self-esteem. With this study one could come to a conclusion that they had achieved their objective.

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